

Central Intelligence Agency



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DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

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CHAD: The Rebel Government and Army []

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Summary

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Chad's Libyan-backed rebels led by Goukouni Oueddei have organized a so-called Transitional Government of National Unity and a military wing called the National Liberation Army that is theoretically in control of the northern third of Chad. In reality, the rebels are allowed little freedom of action by the Libyans whose own forces in Chad are in real charge. The rebels are a loose coalition of northern, central, and southern Chadian ethnic and political factions that were defeated by President Habre in June 1982. Their political headquarters is located in Bardai, a town in the rugged Tibesti mountains just south of Chad's Libyan-occupied Aozou Strip. Although unified by opposition to the pro-Western Habre regime, the rebels are plagued by factional rivalries and squabbling that impairs their political and military effectiveness. Only close Libyan tutelage and massive support have held the rebel government and army together. We believe that the cohesiveness of the rebel government could suffer if a prolonged military stand-off ensues in Chad, with southerners in particular becoming restive in the northern desert and eager to return home. []

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This memorandum was prepared by [] West Africa Branch, Africa Division, Office of African and Latin American Analysis. It has been coordinated with the Directorate of Operations. Questions and comments are welcome and may be directed to the Chief, Africa Division, []

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Although the introduction of French forces has frustrated for now Libyan hopes for a military takeover in Chad by the rebels, French desires for a political settlement among Chadian factions gives Tripoli room to maneuver while reinforcing its hold over northern Chad. Libyan leader Qadhafi probably calculates that he can outwait France and the US in expectation that their resolve will falter over time. He probably views a political settlement in Chad as a means of getting the French out and eventually undercutting Habre's grip on power. The rebels probably hope to draw the Libyans into military confrontation with the French, however, just as Habre would like to involve the French against the Libyans.

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The Transitional Government's Main Factions

The Transitional Government of National Unity (GUNT), formed in Libya in October 1982, represents factions of three broad groups of Chad's 240 or so ethnically distinct peoples that have been fighting one another since civil war broke out in 1965. The GUNT, like Habre's regime, appears to have a disproportionate number of Toubou in key positions. The Toubou are fierce warriors who have done the bulk of the fighting in the long civil war even though they make up only 4 percent of the population. The Toubou live in the sparsely populated desert and mountain waste-lands above the 14th parallel.

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Another large group in the GUNT is drawn from numerous fragmented Arab clans that make up 14 percent of the population and reside in central Chad in a belt stretching from Nigeria to Sudan. They are joined by an assortment of Islamized non-Arab tribesmen that also inhabit the central and eastern areas.

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The third major grouping--the black Sara from southern Chad--are people who account for a quarter of the country's nearly 5 million population and reside below the 10th parallel. The Sara were heavily influenced by French culture and Christianity during the colonial era, and they dominated the predominantly Muslim north after independence from France in 1960 until the late 1970s.

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Despite the GUNT's facade of broad ethnic representation, the US Embassy reports that it is skewed in favor of Muslims and particularly toward members of Goukouni's Teda clan of Toubou. Northerners and central Chadians hold 14 of the 20 posts in the GUNT's cabinet. Southern Chadians, who hold six largely technocratic positions, have increasingly restricted influence over policy decisions.

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According to the US Embassy, several major factional leaders opposed to Habre are not included in the GUNT. Mahamat Abba Said, leader of the First Army--which is made up of non-Arab Muslims from central and eastern Chad--has refused to participate in the GUNT and now resides in Lagos, Nigeria. The US Embassy indicates that it is unaware of any other First Army representative in the Bardai Government. Although Facho Balaam's National Democratic Union (UND)--made up of southern Sara intellectuals--has at least one member in the GUNT, Balaam continues to travel throughout West Africa seeking aid for the Union as an alternative to the rebel government.

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Military Organization

The rebel National Army of Liberation now "controls" Chad north of the 16th parallel but only because of massive assistance from Tripoli and the presence of Libyan forces in Faya Largeau and other key towns. In fact, the very existence of a "unified" rebel force is largely the result of Libyan efforts.

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The rebels' mid-summer offensive--during which they captured Faya Largeau and drove to Abeche in the southeast

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After counter-attacking Chadian government forces recaptured Faya Largeau on 30 July, only direct intervention by Libya--involving armor, artillery, mechanized infantry, and combat aircraft--staved off a rebel rout and forced Habre's forces to evacuate Faya Largeau in early August.

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Libyan Intentions

Despite the present military and political stalemate in Chad, we doubt that Libyan leader Qadhafi has given up his long term goal of installing a faithful ally in power in N'Djamena. According to his own public statements, Qadhafi views Habre as an "imperialist threat" to Libya. We believe he remains concerned that if Habre is allowed to recover the north, Chad could become a center of Libyan opposition activity. Moreover, in our judgment, Chad--because of religious and cultural ties established in the 19th century by the Libyan-based Sanusi Islamic order--remains a key target in Qadhafi's larger dream of eventually creating a pan-Islamic state across the Sahara. []

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We believe that if the GUNT gained power in N'Djamena with Libya's logistical and military backing, Qadhafi would expect the new regime to meet certain demands in repayment for his support. Chief among these demands would be that N'Djamena recognize Tripoli's claim to the Libyan-occupied Aozou Strip--a 200 mile-deep area below Chad's border with Libya. Tripoli would also require the government to declare Chad an Islamic republic and sign a defense pact with Libya as a step toward fulfilling Qadhafi's longer term goals. According to a source of the US Embassy in Paris, Goukouni recently referred publicly to the possibility of unifying Chad with Libya. Qadhafi would further expect N'Djamena to acquiesce in the use of Chadian territory to support subversion against neighboring states, particularly Sudan. []

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Outlook

In our view, future Libyan tactics aimed at eventually placing the rebels in power in Chad depend in large part on Qadhafi's assessment of French and US resolve. The possibility of a military takeover of Chad by the Libyan backed rebels has been frustrated at least for the near term by the introduction of French ground and air forces and by the establishment of a line along the 15th parallel beyond which the French say Libyan and rebel forces will not be allowed to pass. Having achieved a military impasse based on a de facto partition of Chad, however, the French clearly are interested in promoting a political settlement between Chad's warring factions that would allow Paris to eventually withdraw its forces. []

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For now, the Libyans are using the lull in the fighting to resupply their forces and to dig in for what could be a long stay in northern Chad. We believe Qadhafi is unlikely to tangle with French forces and probably calculates that he can outwait and outmaneuver the French and the US. In our judgment, the Libyan leader may be content for the time being with de facto control of northern Chad, and he probably favors a political settlement among Chadian factions as a means of getting French forces out and undercutting Habre's grip on power. Goukouni says the GUNT is agreeable to reconciliation negotiations under OAU auspices on the condition that French forces be withdrawn. We believe a withdrawal of French troops coupled with the introduction of pro-Libyan factions into a future government in N'Djamena would enhance Qadhafi's chances of achieving his goal of establishing a friendly regime in Chad--albeit at the risk of setting the stage for another round of fighting. []

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The de facto partition of Chad is not a stable situation, in our judgment. Habre cannot accept the loss of the north, his birthplace and the home of most of his top lieutenants. The forces belonging to Habre's northern faction probably are pushing him to continue fighting and may become disenchanted with his leadership if he does not. We suspect Habre is making plans to attack in the north before the Libyans become thoroughly entrenched and that he will try to draw the French into the fighting. The situation, is unpredictable and will likely remain so for some time. []

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We believe that Goukouni also calculates that a prolonged military stand-off will work to his disadvantage, and that he probably hopes to involve the Libyans in fighting with the French just as Habre would like to involve the French in a confrontation against the Libyans. Southerners in the rebel coalition, who expect to return home via a military victory against Habre, may become restive in the desert north and consider switching sides. The rebels in fact initiated an attack in early September against Habre's forces in the area of Oum Chalouba, apparently without the foreknowledge or approval of the Libyans. When French Jaguar aircraft arrived to reconnoiter the scene the rebels fled in panic and

appealed for Libyan intervention, falsely claiming that they were being bombed by the French. In this instance, the Libyans reacted with caution, sending neither troops nor aircraft to aid the rebels, with the result that the fighting subsided without changing the general situation.

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